Media Planning & Buying in the 21st Century

Foreword

*By Louis M. Schultz, former CEO of Initiative Media, Interpublic Group of Companies*

"When I entered the advertising business in the late 1960’s it seemed that everything was “neat” and organized. You either were a “creative” or a business person and the latter definition was broken into account management or media people.  One occupied space in this hierarchy; one rarely crossed the artificial barriers established by tradition. By the way, the highest level in this silo/caste system was account management or “suits” as exemplified by that recent TV hit “Mad Men”. The creative and media people often took revenge by use the slur: “an empty cab pulled up and a suit got out”.

 Media was thought of as number crunching and really not given much respect. It was the lowest paid and hardly anyone, from that discipline, rose to the top of the agency world to be a CEO. But as all things in advertising have changed in 40 years so did the world of media. Today it is one of the most respected and highly sought professions in advertising. Media agencies are predominant and huge profit centers for their conglomerate parents. And the pay scale is commensurate with its importance in the whole marketing process.

 Ron’s book is an amazing effort at changing the way that academia must evolve in order to keep pace with the business practices. It is difficult to write an introductory book on any subject, let alone media, that avoids the tapestry and constraints of history. I think he has succeeded. He has changed the framework of the discussion from what I would call pigeon-holed thinking into an ecumenical presentation of the future that will shape how advertising and media will be perceived and used in the 21st Century. If you were to walk away from this book with only five ideas, you would be richer from the experience. Here are the most important concepts, as I see them, to remember:

1.     **Media is Creative.** When we introduced this concept in the late 1970’s there was significant up heave in the agency world. How dare we usurp the word “creative” and apply it to such a mundane practice as number crunching. Yet this concept became a driving force in marketing and helped lead the evolution of communication and integrated marketing into the agency world we see today.

Media evolved. Media agencies were established and all the new communications platforms found there home in media. Cable which was mainly a distribution system was first supported by the media departments with dedicated staffing. So was the internet in the early 90’s, Mobil in 2004 and social media at the end of the decade. Media is the incubator for new ideas because it is responsible for spending the client’s advertising monies. *It must lead because it is expected to lead.*  The communication business is so complicated; traditional agency costs are high with correspondingly low margins. Media is the natural repository for specialized services to deal with this revolution. It is the one place where an idea can be conceived and then born thru a media spending.

**2.     Everything is media.** Ron does an excellent job of demonstrating this concept. Every communication that touches a consumer is a media exposure and has some value. If you go to a concert and see the sponsors name and logo on the ticket, that exposure has value. So does the 2 minute film on the screen that precedes the performance or the backstage passes that you can win by text on the Jumbotron at intermission. It is the media person’s job to think about all the ways that a marketing effort can reach the right prospect and create a positive interaction that results in either a measurable return on objective or, if the situation affords the opportunity, a real return on investment.

**3.     It is all about Communications Planning.** If everything is media then it naturally follows that everything should be planned at the same time and in the same place –more often that not that location is the media department. This requires two things to be successful. First the client must accept communication planning as a discipline and not pre-allocate its marketing funds into silos or baskets for a specific department such as event management or PR. A holistic approach to the planning process is essential if the client expects a positive ROI.

Second the media team must integrate itself into other agencies and/or departments. While media may have expertise and many ideas it does not have all the ideas. Coordination is a key ingredient. So a corollary thought has to be: *The only bad idea is no idea.*

**4.     There is no such thing as Traditional and New Media.** This is a hard concept for many to accept because it has been drummed into our heads for over a century. It is easy to refer to long established media such as magazines and broadcast television as “traditional media”. It is easy but it is wrong. Let’s change the nomenclature to “established/fundamental” and “evolving” so that we can examine the media contextually in the way they are used and not when they created.

Consider that every so-called traditional medium was once a new medium. The advent of cable as an adverting medium was due to government rule changes in the late 1970’s. It was around for decades any yet when it started to carry advertising it was “new”. Today TV has evolved so that very few people do not receive their TV programming from a cable or satellite distribution system. And it too is evolving into wireless internet and mobile distribution platforms.

Think about the social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Are they really new media? We could postulate that they are really mainstream (AKA traditional media) for anyone under thirty. In a short time they have become such an integral part of our daily lives that they are fundamental to actually defining generations of people.

And then think about industries such as magazines and newspapers. In order to survive they are creating on-line and mobile apps and are evolving away from printed versions (it will not disappear entirely in the next 50 years) into real time web/mobile based communication opportunities.

We should think or Darwin when we think of media? It has to evolve or perish.

5.     **Content is King.** No matter how we get communications to the consumer, it still must be relevant. So media is not about buying something cheaper. It involves creating an opportunity with the vehicle of choice and an effective message to touch the consumer in a manner that creates a positive and memorable interaction. It is ultimately about selling something, a product or an idea, and that is not just about putting more messages in front of people.

\*\*\*

*In summary, when you read this new approach to basic media principles do not think of it as a “how to manual” – a do it yourself training device. Rather think of it as a guidepost to challenge your creative thinking. Force yourself to ask tough questions and probe, not just for facts, but rather for understanding. Then open your mind to the possible for breaking or ignoring the rules and actually developing the next innovative concept that will change the way advertising is produced and transmitted to the public.*

*If you embrace this attitude then you will join the legions of people who found that, to paraphrase Star Trek, “resistance was futile.” They were assimilated. "*

LOUIS M. SCHULTZ